

The Honorable Ginny Brown-Waite
Testimony before the
House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Wednesday, June 23, 2004
H.R. 3779
Safeguarding Schoolchildren of Deployed Soldiers Act

Introduction:

Mr. Chairman, distinguished Members of the Committee; I am pleased to have this opportunity to discuss legislation I introduced with Congresswoman Louise Slaughter. As the Vice-Chair of the Congressional Caucus for Women's Issues, I have had the privilege of working closely with Ms. Slaughter to pass legislation which will provide meaningful relief to the lives of our soldiers and their families.

H.R. 3779, Safeguarding Schoolchildren of Deployed Soldiers Act will ease the burden of deployment on the families of our soldiers.

As you heard from the Honorable Congresswoman from New York, service to one's country often requires leaving your family behind. As if the emotional strain of separation is not enough, some of our soldiers' children are currently forced into a new environment and new school as a result of their parent's deployment. This causes additional stress on a child who is already adjusting to the temporary loss of their parent. An established routine, familiar peer group, and good friends help a child cope with their parent's deployment. This legislation provides a common sense solution to help the families who already sacrifice so much.

How the bill works:

- H.R. 3779 amends the Servicemember's Civil Relief Act (SCRA) of 1940.
 - Congress has long recognized the need to minimize the hardships to our men and women in uniform. Originally enacted in 1940, this law provides relief to military personnel from many of the economic and legal burdens they have incurred because of their deployments.
- This bill requires schools to treat a child who changes residence based on the military service of one or both parents as if the child has the residence he or she had before the relocation.
 - This will allow the student to continue to attend the same school after their parent is deployed.
- This legislation will not burden the school with the transportation of a child to or from school. Transportation will be the responsibility of the student and his or

her guardian.

Support for the Legislation:

In the FY05 Budget, the Administration recognized the need to mitigate the hardship of deployment on Military Families:

From page 107 of the President's Budget for Fiscal Year 2005:

"Children of military families—who frequently move to new schools—face difficult challenges when the new school has different educational and health-related requirements. The Department of Education and the Department of Defense will work with States on strategies to prevent disruption in the educational progress of children of military families and to ease the stresses on military families."

This legislative is one means of providing continuity to the lives of military families.

Conclusion:

As our men and women in uniform continue to be deployed in support of military operations around the world, it is vital that we do our best to minimize the disturbance to their lives and those of their families. The protection provided by this measure is of great consequence to our children's education and the peace of mind of our soldiers. I urge your support of H.R. 3779 and I appreciate the efforts of the Committee to hold this hearing today to discuss the merits of this bill.